

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0441
EXDIS
CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR BC, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KHAMA

REF: GABORONE 0427

1. AFTER PRESIDENT KHAMA HAD CONDUCTED SOME 30-MINUTE DISCUSSION ON RHODESIA, AND KEEPING IN MIND HIS DOCTOR'S ORDERS TO REDUCE DEMANDS ON HIS TIME, I MOVE TO LEAVE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION REPORTED REFTEL. PRESIDENT KHAMA MENTIONED ME TO STAY, SAYING HE HAD A QUESTION ABOUT INCREASINGLY PUBLICIZED CONCERN FOR "PROTECTION FOR MINORITY RIGHTS AND MINORITY GROUPS".

2. HE INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT WITH A LITTLE SPEECH ABOUT RENEWED PRESS EMPHASIS, ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE IMPORTANCE OF "CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION FOR MINORITIES" IN RHODESIA AS WELL AS IN NAMIBIA. THIS CONCERN KHAMA SAID HE FOUND "HARD TO UNDERSTAND". THERE IS NOT A WORD IN BOTSWANA'S CONSTITUTION ABOUT PROTECTING MINORITY GROUPS; RATHER THE CONSTITUTION OF BOTSWANA PROTECTS INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES AGAINST NATIONALIZATION AND FORCIBLE DISPOSSESSION OF PROPERTY.

3. PRESIDENT KHAMA ASKED WHAT KIND OF SPECIAL PROTECTION WAS ENVISAGED BY THESE "APPEALS" TO PROTECT MINORITY GROUPS. WHY
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ARE GUARANTEES TO INDIVIDUALS, AS IN BOTSWANA'S CONSTITUTION, INSUFFICIENT? WHAT EFFECT WOULD SPECIAL " PROTECTION OF MINORITIES" HAVE ONCE MAJORITY RULE IS ACHIEVED? MAJORITIES CAN CHANGE CONSTITUTIONS, HE NOTED.

4. IN REPLY I COMMENTED THAT CALLS FOR MINORITY PROTECTION APPEARED TO STEM IN PART FROM THE REGRETTABLE FACT THAT FEW

NATIONS COULD MATCH BOTSWANA'S RECORD OF PROTECTION AND EQUALITY UNDER THE LAW. IN SOME CASES I COULD IMAGINE GUARANTEES WERE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE TRANSITION, E.G. BY LESSENING MINORITY INTOLERANCE AND ATTEMPTING TO GIVE THEM A STAKE IN THE SOLUTION. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT CONSTITUTIONS CAN BE CHANGED, I ADDED THAT EFFORT TO ARRANGE SUCH GUARANTEES (HOWEVER INEFFECTIVE) WAS UNDERSTANDABLE GIVEN THE ABSENCE OF ANY REAL ALTERNATIVE. PRESIDENT KHAMISA SEEMED UNMOVED AND REITERATED THAT SINCE THE MAJORITY CAN CHANGE A CONSTITUTION IT WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO ASSURE THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS THAN OF SELECTED MINORITIES.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: THE ABOVE DISCUSSION WAS INCONCLUSIVE. PRESIDENT KHAMISA WOULD CLEARLY BE RECEPTIVE TO FURTHER OBSERVATIONS THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO CONVEY ON THIS SUBJECT.

6. ALLEGATIONS OF UNFRIENDLY PRESS. AS I ONCE AGAIN PREPARED TO LEAVE, PRESIDENT KHAMISA SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO RAISE ANOTHER QUESTION, THIS ONE ABOUT GROWING CRITICISM OF BOTSWANA IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS. HE NOTED THIS CRITICISM HAD APPEARED DURING THE AFFAIR OF THE RHODESIAN CHILDREN'S ARRIVAL IN BOTSWANA IN LATE JANUARY. HE SAW IT IN CONTINUING ACCUSATIONS THAT THERE ARE FREEDOM FIGHTER BASES IN, AND OPERATIONS FROM, BOTSWANA. RECENTLY HE HAD READ "SPECULATION" ABOUT "SEVENTEEN PLANELoads OF ARMS FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS ARRIVING IN BOTSWANA". THE LATEST WAS ALLEGATION THAT 150 CUBANS WERE CAMPED IN AN OBSCURE VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRY FOR THE PURPOSE OF "CONDUCTING TRAINING". (KHAMISA SAID HE HAD NEVER PREVIOUSLY HEARD OF THE VILLAGE BUT HAD NOW LOCATED IT.)

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7. THESE ALLEGATIONS WERE BEING PRESENTED IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS AS "SOMETHING PROVED". AND LATELY THE SAME PRESS HAS BEGUN TO CITE "WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES" AS THE BASIS FOR THESE REPORTS. WHAT ARE THESE "WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES", HE ASKED. HE SAID REITERATION OF THESE ALLEGATIONS HAD NOW REACHED THE POINT WHERE HE CONSIDERED IT A "CAMPAIGN TO MAKE BOTSWANA OUT AS DOING WHAT WE ARE NOT DOING".

8. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT LEARNING OF REPORTS AND COMMENTED THAT CITATION OF "WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES" WAS WHOLLY NEW TO ME. CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND RHODESIAN PRESS HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING UNRELIABLE; PERHAPS WE HAD BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THEM AND TOO READY TO DISCOUNT THEM AND THEIR INFLUENCE. IT WAS OUR INFORMAL OPINION, HOWEVER, AND THAT OF MOST DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES, THAT THE RHODESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS HAD FAILED TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF THE "ABDUCTION" THEME REGARDING THE RHODESIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN. ON THE CONTRARY, THE FACTS (PRESS REPORTS, CHURCH SPOKESMEN, ETC.) SEEMED TO SUPPORT BOTSWANA. I SAID THAT WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY PRESS CLIPPINGS

WITH REFERENCE TO "WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES"; THEY MIGHT HELP
OUR AUTHORITIES IN IDENTIFYING THE ORIGIN OF SUCH REPORTS.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: ANY ASSISTANCE SPECIALISTS ON SOUTH AFRICAN
PRESS MIGHT PROVIDE IN THE WAY OF EXPLAINING ATTRIBUTION TO "WESTERN
INTELLIGENCE SOURCES" OF ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING BOTSWANA WOULD BE
MOST APPRECIATED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO ASK FOR ILLUSTRATIVE CLIPPINGS,
WHICH PRESIDENT'S ASSISTANT JOE LEGWAILA PROMISED TO PROVIDE;
MEANWHILE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CLARIFICATION ADDRESSEES
COULD GIVE US.

10. DEPT REPEAT AS DESIRED.
NORLAND

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O.

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